

We Share Montana History

BILL NO. SB-88

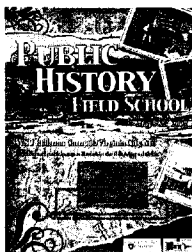
A Positive Impact for Montana

- The properties and collections have appreciated to \$30 million (Dept. of Administration, 2005), a 447% return on initial investment of \$6.7 million.
- The MHC has been awarded over \$3 million in federal grants since 1999.
- The MHC leases space to over 35 private small businesses, that hire employees, pay taxes, and use our buildings.
- Our sites are featured in several national publications or film documentaries each year, providing free publicity for Montana (a value of at least \$250,000).
- Over 20,000 volunteer hours are logged in 2006, providing services, maintenance and preservation.

With expanded partnerships we attract new funding, volunteer assistance, and national recognition for Montana.



We stabilize and preserve historic buildings, here work is done on Montana's territorial capital in Virginia City, 1865-1875.

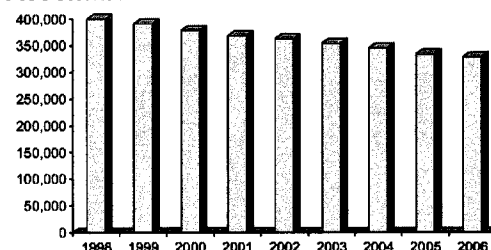


Virginia and Nevada Cities are the 5th most visited sites in Montana (ITRR, Sept. 2006 Niche News).

Continued Funding Is Critical

- State funding accounts for only 27% of our total budget, the rest is earned revenue, private and federal funds.
- State funds are leveraged and often matched with federal and private funds.
- There is a significant backlog of restoration needed on buildings and artifacts if we are to protect these assets.
- Current federal funding will expire this year.
- Earned revenues have increased substantially since 1997, but have leveled off as we are at 100% occupancy.
- Without continued state support we will be forced to reduce visitor services and loss ground in our preservation efforts.

Inflation has reduced the effectiveness of the Accommodations Tax – static since 1997



Inflation calculated by Census and Economic Information Center, MT Dept. of Commerce, 2006.

Requests of the 2007 Legislature

The Montana Heritage Commission requires funding to care for these state-owned properties, and to continue our work in preservation and visitor enjoyment of our historic treasures.

- ♦ **Reauthorize** the accommodations tax for the Montana Heritage Commission (SB 88).
- ♦ **Approve** the long-range building funds allocated for historic preservation in Virginia City and Nevada City (HB 5).
- ♦ **Consider** additional funding support that will ensure the preservation and maintenance of these assets (LC 678).

Montana & National Significance

- The historic collection of western American artifacts in Virginia and Nevada Cities is one of the largest outside of the Smithsonian Institute.
- Virginia City was the territorial Capital of Montana from 1865 to 1875.
- Virginia City is "one of the nation's most ambitious preservation projects..." (*The New York Times*, 2002).
- In 1962, the U.S. Department of Interior recognized the national significance of Virginia City and designated it a National Historic Landmark.



MHC Staff prepare historic mud wagon for transport to conservator.



A huge backlog of preservation work is still required to protect state assets.



MHC History Camp attracts kids from across Montana.

Background

The Montana Legislature purchased the Bovey properties in 1997 including 160 acres of land, 248 buildings, and an estimated 1,000,000 artifacts in Virginia and Nevada Cities. The 55th Legislature established the Montana Heritage Commission (MHC) to preserve, maintain, and develop these state owned historic resources.

Progress and Opportunities

Work has been done on more than half of the historic buildings in order to protect the contents, and to perform basic stabilization. Preservation of buildings and artifacts are ongoing as funds are secured.

- Artifact collections inventory completed; museum-level assessment of items is ongoing.
- Infrastructure improvements have been made to sewer, water, parking, and fire protection.
- Virginia City Institute attracts preservationists nation-wide. VCI will host an accredited field school in 2007.
- Educational partnerships with Montana schools and universities are expanding.
- More people are participating in the Living History program which improves the visitor experience.



Student volunteers with the MHC Virginia City Institute get training and helps us get work done on our historic buildings.

Nevada City Music Hall.

MHC maintains the nations' largest collection of publicly owned music machines, most still play and are used by visitors.



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